

CLAIMS

1. A method for maintaining and promoting hair thickening comprising increasing the expression of keratinocyte growth factor (FGF-7) in hair follicle cells.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein expression of the FGF-7 is increased by applying to the scalp an external skin preparation containing one or more types of agents that increase the expression of FGF-7 in hair follicle cells selected from the group consisting of adenosine, adenosine 5'-phosphoric acid, adenosine 5'-phosphate, CCPA (2-chloro-N<sup>6</sup>-cyclopentyladenosine), C1-IB-MECA (2-chloro-N<sup>6</sup>-(3-iodobenzyl)-9-[5-(methylcarbamoyl)-β-D-ribofuranosyl]adenine) and NECA (N-ethylcarboxyamido-adenosine).

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein at least one type of the agent that increases expression of FGF-7 in the hair follicle cells is adenosine.

4. A method according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the hair follicle cells are dermal papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.

5. A composition for increasing expression of FGF-7 comprising as an active component thereof an agent selected from the group consisting of adenosine, adenosine 5'-phosphoric acid, adenosine 5'-phosphate, CCPA, C1-IB-MECA and NECA.

6. A composition according to claim 5, wherein at least one type of the agents is adenosine.

7. A composition according to claim 5 or 6 that is an external skin preparation that maintains and promotes hair thickening by being applied to the scalp.

8. A method for screening agents that maintain and promote hair thickening, comprising: applying a candidate agent to cells, and selecting an agent that increases the expression of FGF-7 in said cells.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein increased expression of FGF-7 in the cells is determined

by measuring the amount of mRNA that encodes FGF-7  
extracted from the cells.

10. A method according to claim 8 or 9, wherein the  
cells are dermal papilla cells, immortalized dermal  
5 papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.